Wyoming On Wellness

VOL. 1, NO. 2 — "Commit to Your Health" — WINTER 2007

Have you taken your *Health & Well Being Assessment* yet?

Why not? Here are some very good reasons to take this assessment.

1. ***You receive comprehensive Web-based programs*** that offer you the information, support and guidance you need to stay healthy.
2. ***Access to a 24/7 nurseline.***
3. ***If you would like personal and confidential help,*** a personal health coach is available who will support health improvements. Call 866-656-6678 to request your health coach.
4. ***E-mails sent directly to you with information,*** articles and reminders specific to your needs. In addition, a reminder e-mail every six months to update your health assessment.
5. ***This is an effective way to manage and monitor your health*** and well-being.
6. ***Maintaining your health can be challenging*** — but the assessment makes it easy to identify your healthy as well as unhealthy behaviors. You can learn how to change unhealthy behaviors and continue to support healthy ones.
7. ***Your personalized reports are at your fingertips*** — you can go back, view, and print your results at any time.
8. ***It does not cost YOU anything but a little time.***
9. ***There are so many health fads out there and so much information.*** Great-West wellness programs are based upon recommendations from the leading US health agencies, including the Centers for Disease Controls and Prevention, Office of US Surgeon General, National Institute of Health and American Heart Association. All information contained in the articles posted on mygreatwest.com is medically validated.
10. ***Receive $50 after you complete the assessment!***

For more information about how to take the *Health & Well-Being Assessment,* log onto www.mygreatwest.com

If you have not registered, go to the Register Now section and put in the group number 052665; enter your social security number without dashes as your member number. Follow the remaining directions on the page. You will be taken to the next page where you will create your own user name and password for future access. Any questions, contact Tammy Till, Wellness Coordinator at 777-6716 or e-mail at ttill@state.wy.us

If you already completed your assessment, a check will be mailed directly to your home address approximately three weeks of completing your assessment. If you would like to track your check, please call Great-West at 800-685-1060.

Inside this issue

health yourself

8 THINGS YOU CAN DO EVERY DAY TO

Lower your blood pressure

1 **Walk the dog.** If you don't have a dog, take a friend. Or work in the yard or go dancing. Just aim for a total of at least 30 minutes of activity.

2 **Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.** They're packed with potassium, a mineral needed to help control blood pressure.

3 **Get three servings of low-fat dairy foods.** Milk, yogurt, and cheese are rich in calcium, another mineral needed to control blood pressure.

4 **Put down the salt shaker.** Avoid adding salt to food at the table; use herbs and spices for seasoning.

5 **Drink a cup of herb tea** instead of another cup of coffee. Excess caffeine can cause spikes in blood pressure.

6 **Limit alcohol consumption** to no more than two drinks per day for men and one for women.

7 **Use a relaxation technique** like deep breathing to help you control overeating. Excess body weight increases your risk for high blood pressure.

8 **Do something to refresh and renew your psyche.** Meditate, spend time with loved ones, play with your pet, listen to music, or just count your blessings.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

FUNGUS AMONG US

Protect yourself from skin infections

Always wear sandals or thongs when you shower or walk around in health clubs, gyms, spas, or swimming pools.

People with skin infections can spread germs that cause athlete's foot and other viral or bacterial infections.

Before you use gym equipment, wipe it down with a towel. (Courteous gym users wipe equipment down after they use it, too.)

If a facility doesn't look clean—don't exercise there.

Source: American Academy of Dermatology

SAFE STRETCHING

Tender loving care for muscles and joints

Proper stretching can improve your range of motion, release stiff joints, reduce muscle pain, and improve circulation and muscle tone.

- **Walk slowly or ride a stationary bike** for a few minutes to warm up your muscles before stretching. Some trainers recommend stretching after exercise or a workout, when the muscles are heated by blood flow and move more easily.
- **Stretch only until you feel a gentle pull,** but no pain.
- **Avoid bouncing.** It can tear muscle fibers, which creates scar tissue when it heals and may make you less flexible in the end.
- **Stretch muscles on both sides** of the body evenly.
- **Start gently and hold** stretches for 15 to 30 seconds. Complete six to eight repetitions.
- **Never hold your breath** while stretching. Deep, easy breathing is the key to relaxation.

Source: All About Joints: How to Prevent and Recover from Common Injury, by Irwin M. Siegel, MD, Demos Medical Publishing

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For runners: Stride right

Finding the best length for your running stride may protect you from injury as well as allow you to run longer and faster.

Exercise physiologist and running coach Jack Daniels, PhD, advises runners to find their optimal stride by aiming for 180 steps per minute. Without focusing on form, try counting the steps on one leg for one minute and see how close you can come to 90. The optimal rate should feel like you are running "over the ground, not into it."

PREVENT

Sprains & strains

- Warm up your muscles with a five-minute walk before you start any activity.
- Increase your level of activity by no more than 10% a week.
- Stretch after you exercise, and never bounce when stretching.
- Wear shoes that fit properly.
- Replace athletic shoes as soon as the tread wears out or the heel wears down on one side.
- Run on even surfaces.
- Use proper form, especially when weight lifting.
- Don't smoke. Smoking is a risk factor for back injuries.
- Take it easy when you're tired, in pain, or under emotional stress.
- Give yourself days off, and avoid exercising too much, too hard, or too fast.
- Eat a healthy diet to keep muscles strong.
- Prevent falls. Keep stairways, walkways, yards, and driveways free of clutter. Salt or sand icy patches in winter.

Treat minor injuries or muscle soreness with RICE:

***R**est*
***I**ce*
***C**ompression*
***E**levation*

Smart Living

To protect your knees: Stop doing anything that causes pain.

health news

Doc Talk

It's the little things that count!

Many New Year's resolutions will be made about health behaviors, and almost as many will be broken. But take heart — recent research shows small changes make a big difference:

- A UCLA study comparing diets of overweight and normal-weight adults found normal-weight people ate one more fruit serving per day.
- A Harvard study found drinking one extra can of sweetened soda per day was linked with a weight gain of 15 pounds per year.
- The National Institute on Aging found daily activities such as gardening, household chores, and climbing stairs helped older adults live longer.

These steps can increase your odds of success:

- **Pick one simple daily health behavior to change** — one less soda, one fruit serving instead of a snack or dessert, climbing stairs instead of using the elevator.
- **Set a date to begin.**
- **Make the change together** with family and/or friends.
- **Reward yourself for small victories.**

Changing health habits can be difficult. But we know from smoking research that the more often you try to quit, the more likely you are to succeed. As the old adage goes: *"If at first you don't succeed..."*

William J. Mayer, MD, MPH
Medical Editor

knee problems?

Bike riding, especially on a stationary bike, can help you stay fit without putting too much strain on your hips, knees, and feet.

Adjust the seat height so that your knees maintain a slight bend when the pedal is at its lowest point. Always warm up for at least five minutes. Start slowly, and set the bike at limited or no resistance if you have knee problems.

Source: Exercise and Your Arthritis, published by The Arthritis Foundation, www.arthritis.org

generic drugs

One way to save money on prescriptions is to ask if a generic equivalent or generic substitute is available for a brand-name drug.

Generic drugs must meet federal standards for the amount of medication present in a capsule and are almost always identical to brand names. When a generic equivalent is not available, there may be a generic drug in the same class of medicines that would be a good substitute for your brand-name drug.

man with a plan

When asked what he was doing to get his family prepared for a pandemic flu, Mike Leavitt, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, said they were asking these questions:

Who will we call if we get separated? Where will we reunite? Do we have enough supplies to stay home for a few days? Are there certain medications we might need?

"We're just a few hundred feet from a convenience store, and we've come to depend on it as our pantry. That's not a good idea," added Leavitt.

sound check

If you work in an environment where you need to raise your voice to be heard, take 15-minute "quiet breaks" every few hours. When that's not possible, wear hearing-protective devices. Long exposure to high sound levels increases your risk for permanent hearing loss.

Source: House Ear Institute, www.hei.org

safe temperatures

Indoor temperatures of 60 to 65 degrees inside your house during the winter can cause a life-threatening drop in body temperature called hypothermia, especially for the elderly.

Set your thermostat to at least 68 degrees to be safe, particularly if you are an elderly person living alone. Wear several layers of loose clothing or use a space heater to help stay warm during winter's blasts.

Hypothermia can cause confusion, sleepiness, shallow breathing, or even slurred speech and should be treated by a doctor as soon as possible.

Shivering, slow reactions, and stiffening in the arms or legs may be signs that you are getting too cold.

Source: National Institute on Aging

volunteer blood donor

One way to be a hero is to donate blood. You need to be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 100 pounds, and pass a brief physical. The entire process usually takes an hour or less.

One pint of blood can save up to three lives. To locate a blood bank near you, visit the American Association of Blood Banks at aabb.org.

you can use

shopping cart hazards

Always use the seat belt if you let your child ride in a shopping cart. Shopping carts top the list of accidental health hazards to children. Most injuries occur when children fall out or when the cart tips over. Head and neck injuries are involved in more than three-quarters of the accidents.

Stay with your child in a cart at all times, and never let them stand up in the cart, or ride in the basket or on the outside.

Source: Pediatrics, Vol. 118, pg. 825

sweat

Sweat has no odor itself, but when it is combined with naturally occurring bacteria on the body, it's time to take a shower and break out the deodorant.

Sweat is made up of much more than water. It includes ammonia, calcium, iodine, iron, potassium, and sodium, along with several other minerals.

Sodium and phosphorus are in the highest concentrations, which is why sweat stings the eyes and tastes salty.

Source: Dermatology Insights, Vol. 3, No. 1

exercise & diabetes

People with type 2 diabetes who followed a regular exercise program (most exercised three times per week) showed a drop in blood glucose levels that was comparable to taking medication to regulate blood sugar.

Exercise also helps the body use insulin more easily, decreases blood fats, and helps burn fat around the abdominal organs.

Source: Center for the Advancement of Health

cervical health

Infection with HPV (human papillomavirus) is the most important risk factor for cervical cancer.

A new vaccine has been approved to protect against HPV, but it does not eliminate the need for women to have regular Pap smears to screen for cervical cancer up until at least age 70. Women with a history of abnormal Pap smears need to continue them beyond age 70.

Regular Pap smears should begin three years after first having vaginal intercourse but no later than age 21.

birth defects

Avoid changing the litter in cat boxes if you're a woman who is pregnant or could become pregnant. Cat litter is a possible source of toxoplasmosis, an infection that can cause birth defects. Raw or uncooked meat may also contain the parasite that causes toxoplasmosis.

Since up to 50% of pregnancies are unplanned, it's important to protect yourself before you become pregnant. Other ways to prevent birth defects: Avoid alcohol, smoking, and using drugs; always ask your doctor before taking any over-the-counter medications; and take a daily multivitamin containing at least 400 micrograms of folic acid.

Sources: March of Dimes; The National Institute of Medicine

> ***"Cynics always say no. Saying yes leads to knowledge. So for as long as you have the strength to, say yes."***
>
> — Stephen Colbert

nature vs. nurture

How well you age has more to do with lifestyle than what you inherited from your parents and grandparents.

"Only about one-third of aging is heredity; the rest is acquired — that means you are responsible for your own old age," says John W. Rowe, former director of the Macarthur Foundation Research on Successful Aging.

Not smoking, exercise, a nutritious diet, controlling your weight, staying connected with family, friends, and meaningful activities are elements of successful aging.

alcohol-free hot toddies

Orange-cranberry toddy: Combine and heat to boiling 2 cups cranberry juice, 1⁄4 cup sugar, 1 stick cinnamon, 8 whole cloves, 6 cups orange juice. Serve with orange slices.

Source: Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board

Lemon-ginger toddy: Add the juice of half a lemon, a quarter-size piece of ginger, and 2 teaspoons of honey to a mug of boiling water. Let steep at least 3 minutes.

Source: Jill Novartz, Food Network Kitchens

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ON A TIGHT BUDGET?

Lower your food costs without sacrificing nutrition

- **Try main-course meals that use less meat and more vegetables,** such as tacos, a stir fry with a small amount of chicken or beef, or stews and soups packed with vegetables and legumes.
- **Make food from scratch.** It's worth the time. Prepackaged foods are usually higher in fat, calories, sodium, sugar, and price. Bring homemade snacks when the family goes out so you won't be tempted to stop for fast foods.
- **Be a smart shopper.** Plan your meals a week in advance and make a shopping list. Don't shop when you're hungry. Check for items on sale. Shop at discount food outlets, and stores that sell generic foods, their own brands, and foods in bulk. Always check the expiration dates on milk and perishable foods. Foods on sale may be starting to get old.
- **Organic foods tend be more expensive,** but if you do want to buy at least some organic fruits and vegetables, choose those that collect the most chemicals when conventional growing methods are used. These include: apples, bell peppers, celery, cherries, hot peppers, imported grapes, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, red raspberries, strawberries, and spinach.
- **Check the unit price on foods;** don't just look at the size of the package.
- **Read nutrition labels** when you compare products.

Sources: The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Weight Management Center; Environmental Working Group

Trout in a pouch

For one serving:

- 15-inch sheet of parchment paper or aluminum foil
- 1 trout fillet (about 4 ounces)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. grated, peeled fresh ginger
- 1 medium green onion, chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup whole fresh basil leaves

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Fold and cut parchment into a heart shape. Open, lightly spray one side of the heart with nonstick cooking spray, then place trout on top. Add remaining ingredients on top of trout. Fold over the other half of the heart to cover trout. Seal pouch by crimping the edges; and at the bottom of the heart, fold the point under. Place pouch on a baking sheet. Bake for 5–8 minutes. Place pouch on a plate. Carefully open with a fork and remove contents, discarding pouch.

Serves 1. Per serving: 293 calories, 1 g carbohydrate, 116 mg cholesterol, 1 g dietary fiber, 12 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 42 g protein, 73 mg sodium.

Source: Swedish Hospital, Seattle, WA

ABOUT

Basil

A member of the mint family, basil is well-recognized as the primary ingredient in pesto, the mixture that also includes Parmesan cheese, pine nuts, and olive oil. But basil's minty, somewhat clove-like flavor goes well with a variety of foods.

The bright green leaves of basil are a good source of vitamin K, a mineral important for bone building, as well as iron, calcium, and vitamin A.

For better flavor, use fresh basil whenever possible.

COMFORT & SUPPORT

When someone has a serious illness

When a family member or close friend has a serious illness, the most important thing you can do is make them feel truly cared about. The way you and other people interact with the person may be what matters most.

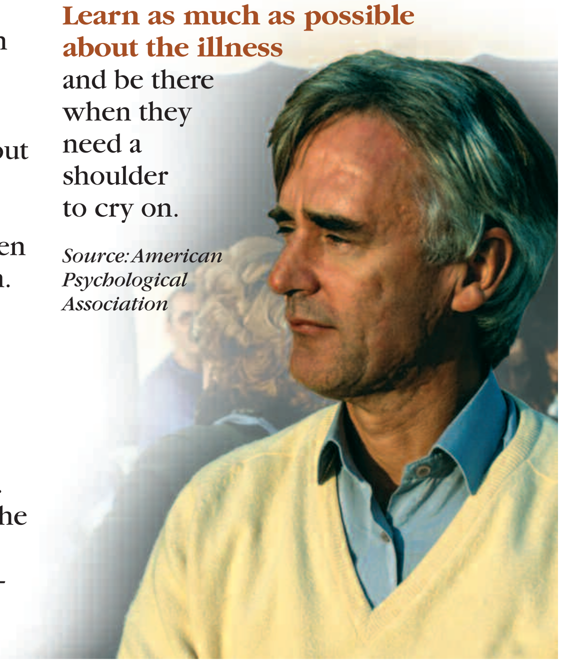
Avoid family secrets. Be open and direct, and tell all family members about the illness, even children. If children aren't told what's happening, their anxiety can increase and they may even feel they are the cause of the problem. The joy and laughter of children can also be a great comfort to the person with the illness.

Everybody under the sun doesn't need to know, so choose carefully when you decide to tell other people. Think about whether or not sharing the information will give you a sense of more support and strengthen the relationship—with some people, it may cause a strain.

Be clear about how people can help. Ask for and accept offers to drive a carpool, fix a meal, take the person to the doctor, or help with other errands.

Learn as much as possible about the illness and be there when they need a shoulder to cry on.

Source: American Psychological Association



PARENTING

Teaching kids to care about others

If you see your child doing something thoughtless or cruel, let them know right away that it's something that you don't want them to do. Be honest and firm and focus on the act, not the child. Say something like "What you did was not very nice," instead of "You're not very nice."

Then take the opportunity to teach your child something instead of making them feel guilty, such as, "It hurts the cat when you pull his tail, and that's why he scratched you." Also demonstrate for your child an alternative to the harmful behavior, such as gently petting the cat.

Source: American Psychological Association

PEEL YOUR

Inner couch potato

What to do when you find yourself making excuses not to exercise:

"I'M TOO BUSY"
Write down time to exercise in your daily calendar. Send yourself an e-mail or a voice message reminding you to take an activity break every afternoon.

"IT BORES ME"
Choose several activities you enjoy and alternate them on different days. Walking, bicycling, swimming, dancing, skating, gardening, and aerobics are just some of the options.

"I'M TOO TIRED"
You'll have more energy if you get regular activity.

"IT'S EXPENSIVE"
Outside of the cost of a good pair of shoes, walking and jogging are free.

"I'M TOO OLD"
No matter what your age, activity will help control your weight and improve balance, mobility, and flexibility. If you've been a jogger most of your life, you may need to start walking. Switch from aerobics classes to yoga or tai chi. Play doubles tennis instead of singles.

"IT'S TOO DARK, TOO COLD, TOO HOT"
That's why they make gyms and indoor shopping malls for walking.

"I'M SO FAR OUT OF SHAPE IT'S HOPELESS"
Take a class for people who have weight or fitness issues.

www.MyGreatWest.com

What *MyGreatWest.com* has to offer…

For all Great West participants, this website is available to you!!! You may have completed your Health and Well-Being assessment on mygreatwest.com – but have you looked any further? Great-West Health Care's website is full of information for you and your family that will help you understand and develop a healthy future together. There are many aspects of insurance benefits; one benefit that is right at your fingertips is the Great-West website.

On this website there is information that will help you to find the perfect exercise program, help you create a healthy meal plan, and much more. All of this is free for the taking through mygreatwest.com.

After you log into mygreatwest.com you will see several subjects listed. Just click on the Healthy Living tab to see what is out there for you to explore…

Healthy Living tab; fitness

Fitness Overview with calculators for target heart rates, calories burned during exercise, activity calorie calculator - see example above to the right.

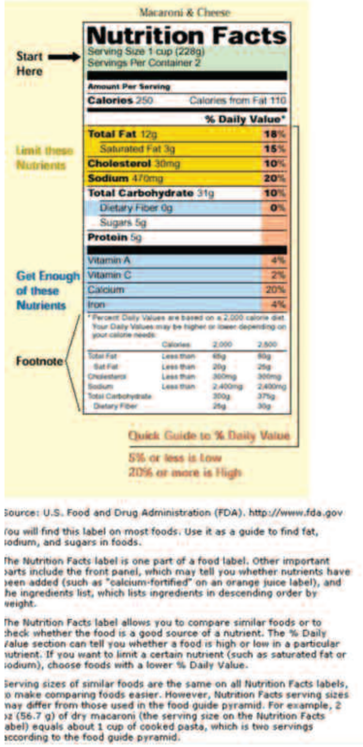
See pictures of basic muscle-conditioning exercise, resistance training and weight training with free weights.

Learn about becoming more active with advice and questions. What clothing and gear is correct for you, learn about fitness machines and how to use them correctly and how to purchase equipment.

Healthy Living tab; nutrition

Healthy Eating overview with recommended number of servings from each food group from the new food guide pyramid.

See sample food diary logs and how to decipher and understand a nutrition label. There is even a section for vegetarian diets and organic foods. With added information regarding how to choose vitamin supplements and a table listing what each vitamin does in the body and what foods they are in — even meal planning tips with a grocery list!



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